

VZCZCXRO6373
OO RUEHKN RUEH MJ RUEHPB
DE RUEHSV #0057/01 0232046
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 232046Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY SUVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3695
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0238
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1531
RUEHKN/AMEMBASSY KOLONIA PRIORITY 0180
RUEH MJ/AMEMBASSY MAJURO PRIORITY 0622
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 1113
RUEHNZ/AMCONSUL AUCKLAND PRIORITY 0325
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY 0041
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY PRIORITY 0731
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI PRIORITY 0184

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SUVA 000057

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [EAID](#) [FJ](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: MILITARY AND INTERIM GOVERNMENT ASK TAIWAN MISSION
IN FIJI FOR ARMS AND AID

REF: A. SUVA 35

[1](#)B. SUVA 15

[1](#)C. STATE 7966

[1](#)D. SUVA 30

Classified By: Ambassador Dinger per 1.5 (B) and (D)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The Taiwan Trade Mission in Fiji has been approached separately by the Fiji military and the Prime Minister's Office with requests for aid. A high-ranking military officer asked the Trade Mission to pass to Taipei a request for arms and military equipment. The Prime Minister's Office asked for a continuation of Taiwan's "grass roots" funding, wherein over USD 1 million annually has been channeled through the PM's office. The Taiwan representative to Fiji told us he referred the two requests to Taipei. We strongly urged that Taiwan say "no" to both. End summary.

Request for Military Aid

[1](#)2. (C) Sherman Kuo, Taiwan's unofficial representative to Fiji, told us that in early January Lt. Colonel Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba Mara, Commanding Officer of the RFMF third infantry regiment, approached him about having Taiwan provide arms and military equipment to Fiji. Kuo said Mara was very vague, and specified no value or amount of equipment desired by the RFMF. Kuo told Mara he would seek Taipei's guidance.

Kuo told us he was surprised by the request, since Taiwan has never developed a military-to-military relationship with Fiji. He suggested that Mara, who is a long-time acquaintance, may have been "fishing" without instructions from his superiors. Kuo said he downplayed the request when he passed it to Taipei verbally. (Comment: Mara is in the top echelon of RFMF leadership and was a key player in planning and executing the coup. He is unlikely to have put forward any initiative without Bainimarama's explicit approval. End comment.)

Widescreen TVs From the Taiwan Community

[1](#)3. (C) Kuo said Mara was also involved in a more modest request for Taiwan assistance. Mara approached a Taiwanese businessman in late December, suggesting that it would be a good idea for the Taiwan community to donate money and other items to the RFMF. The businessman in turn suggested to Kuo

that the Taiwan Mission should be the donor. Kuo told the businessman that the Mission wanted no part of this transaction. Ultimately, two Taiwan businessmen donated large flat screen TVs and other items to the RFMF on behalf of the Taiwan community in Fiji, saying they were grateful for the military's efforts to maintain peace and stability (Ref A). Media covered the story.

PM's Office Also Comes Calling

14. (C) Kuo said he recently received a call from the interim PM's office in regard to the USD\$1.25 million per year in "grass roots" funding Taiwan has channeled through the PM's Office in the past. Kuo said such funding is above board, and that Taiwan has always received an accounting from the PM's office about projects funded. He admitted, however, that Taiwan "hasn't looked too closely" at how the money is spent. (Comment: The PRC Ambassador to Fiji told the Ambassador earlier this year that this fund has long been a vehicle whereby Taiwan bought quasi-diplomatic status for the Taiwan office in Fiji (ref B). The fund appears to us to be a slush fund for the PM and should, by all rights, be a target of the Commodore's ballyhooed "clean up campaign." End comment.)

15. (C) Kuo said Taipei has not yet responded to the request from the interim PM's office and has put the first quarter 2007 payment to the fund on hold. Using Ref C points, we strongly urged Taiwan to terminate this "grass roots" funding program, to say no to the request for military assistance, and not to take any other steps to underwrite the illegal interim government. Kuo promised to pass the message back to Taipei.

SUVA 00000057 002 OF 002

Taiwan Willing to Engage with Interim Regime

16. (C) Kuo said he has quietly talked to one interim minister, Bernadette Rounds-Ganilau, about Taiwan engagement with the interim regime. Rounds-Ganilau told him to bide his time, because the interim government is much more focused on building ties to the PRC. Kuo said Taipei would look for diplomatic openings, such as a visit to Taipei from an interim minister. He noted that Rounds-Ganilau would be a good candidate as Minister of Labor, Tourism and the Environment, since Taiwan will be hosting an environmental conference at mid-year. Kuo noted that while Taiwan had a good relationship with PM Qarase, Qarase had not allowed any of his ministers to travel to Taiwan, for fear of provoking the PRC.

Comment: The Interim Government and China

17. (C) Representatives of the PRC Embassy in Fiji told us again today that, aside from inquiring about the status of projects agreed to in the past, the interim government of Fiji, including the military, has not made any requests for new assistance (see also Ref D). Given the multiple attempts to engage with Taiwan on assistance, it seems likely that the interim government has made, or soon will make, similar approaches to the PRC.

.
DINGER